

The Virtue of Friendship

09/05/07

Endow Colorado Women's Conference

September 8, 2007

Penrose House, Colorado Springs

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Gloria to the Father, to the Son, & to the Holy Spirit
Mary, Seat of Wisdom, Pray for me

Introduction

As Christian women, when we ponder the friendships among women mentioned in the New Testament, we easily recall the friendships of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, with Mary Magdalene, with Mary, the mother of James and Joseph, with the mother of the sons of Zebedee, John and James, as they stood together under the cross; her friendship with her cousin Elizabeth as she went in haste to see her after the Annunciation, and her friendship with the family of those being married at Cana. These examples in Scripture reveal that Mary lived particular friendships along the way of the pilgrimage of her vocation. They were friendships with other women, with men, with the old and with the young; ^{and} ~~but~~ they were named and specified.

Jesus Christ reveals the Friendship of God

Perhaps the example of Mary's friendships should not be surprising since her son Jesus revealed to the whole world the meaning of friendship with God. In the Gospel of John, John the Baptist described himself as the intimate friend of Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom: "He who has the bride is the bridegroom; the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice; therefore this joy of mine is now full." (Jn. 3:29) Here, the friend rejoices with the joy of his friend. The 20th C. philosopher and saint Edith Stein, in her study *On*

The Problem of Empathy, described how it is possible for friends to experience shared joy through empathy: “My friend comes to me beaming with joy and tells me he has passed his examination. I comprehend his joy empathically; transferring myself into it, I comprehend the joyfulness of the event and am now primordially joyful over it myself.”¹ We have all likely had similar experiences of empathy with the joy of someone we love.

Jesus also shows how a friend can empathize with the sorrow of his friends. In the Gospel of John we read: “Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus...”, and when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he said to his disciples, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awake him out of sleep,” and after speaking with Martha and seeing Mary weep, when he went to the tomb, “Jesus wept.”² It is human to empathize with the sorrow of a good friend we love.

In addition to describing how friends passively undergo shared emotions of joy or sorrow in empathy with each other’s goods or evils, Jesus also teaches about what friends can actively do for one another: “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” (Jn: 15:13). Sister Barbara Reid, O.P., wrote in her analysis of “Jesus in the Gospel of John: Friend Who Lays Down His Life Out of Love for His Friends,” that “the theme weaves throughout the whole Gospel... in the formation of Jesus as friend, then Jesus’ ministry of making friends, and finally, Jesus teaching his disciples how to be such friends.”³

¹ Edith Stein, *On The Problem of Empathy* (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1989), p. 13. For a detailed analysis of Stein’s description of the passions see Prudence Allen, RSM, “The Passion of Edith Stein,” *Fides Quaerens Intellectum: A Journal of Theology, Philosophy, and History*, vol. 1, no. 2 (winter 2001): 201-250.

² Jn. 5, 11, and 35.

³ Sister Barbara Reid, O.P., Ph.D., *The Passion of Women and the Passion of Christ*, St. Thomas Aquinas Lecture Series on the Catholic Intellectual Tradition (Grand Rapids, Michigan:

A person can be a friend of God if he actively works to conform his will to the Will of God: “You are my friends if you do what I command you.” (*Jn.* 14:14). God elevates his friends from servitude by actively sharing his most precious goods with his friends: “No longer do I call you servants... but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.” (*Jn.* 15:15).

Jesus reveals to us how to act when being betrayed by a friend in **Mat.** 26: 50, as he said to Judas in the garden: “**Friend**, why are you here?”; or in Luke 22:47: “Judas, would you betray the Son of man with a kiss?” He also prepared his disciples in *Luke* for their own vocation to suffer: “I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.”(Lk. 12:4).

The early Christians began to use the word ‘friend’ as a common way to greet one another: “Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends, every one of them.” (2 *Jn.* 1:15) And when Saint Paul was weak and in chains, even the pagans recognized the value to him of Christian friendship as described by Luke in *Acts*: “The next day we put in at Sidon; and Julius treated Paul kindly, and gave him leave to go to his friends and be cared for.” (27:3)⁴ The Acts

Aquinas College. October 10, 2005), pp. 10-16.

⁴ We can add to these examples the many times that Mary, the Mother of God, revealed how a woman lived Christian friendship: when she was invited to the wedding at Cana, along the way as she followed her Son, at the foot of the Cross standing with the women, in the upper room praying with the disciples, and later while living in the home of John. What are we to conclude from these wonderful examples of friendship among Jesus, Mary and the early disciples? How did this model of Christian friendship continue among the early Christians after the death and resurrection of Jesus? What of the friendship of the married couple Aquila and Priscilla for Paul? Christian friendship took root in the hearts and minds of the early Christians with a fire that spread and transformed the pagan world. See, for example, Father Cantalamessa, Good Friday Sermon, “There Were Also Some Women” (April 6, 2007). Available from www.zenit.org/english/visualizza.phtml?sid=105825 [cited 4/7/2007].

of the Apostles reveal how Lydia acted as a friend to welcome St. Paul into her home (*Acts* 16:14-15); and how Priscilla and Aquila, a married couple, offered both a home to Paul and fraternal correction to Apollos (*Acts* 18:1-24).

Women and Friendship in the Ancient World

These wonderful examples of women's friendships reveal an equal dignity with men and an elevation of their love through Christ. In the Ancient world, these kinds of friendships were not always promoted for women. In ancient Greek poetry we find expressed the opposite movement in a human being, through which human friendships were debased through an enslavement to sexual desires. In the 7th century B.C. the philosopher poet Sappho wrote in one fragment: "Aphrodite's words were 'Eros my slave and of course you too Sappho'".⁵ Nearly all of Sappho's poems emphasized that erotic desire of a woman for a man or for another woman should have priority over reason or duty.

In early Greek philosophy, 5th century BC philosopher Plato and 4th century BC philosopher Aristotle promoted opposite and unsatisfactory understanding of women's friendships, but for different reasons. In the unmarried Plato's utopian *Republic* all particular friendships are absent; they are replaced by a kind of general orientation of working together with different kinds of human beings for common ends. Women and men are considered relatively equal, but since the body was thought to be an unimportant aspect of human identity, and the

⁵ *The Love Songs of Sappho*, trans. Paul Roche (Toronto: Mentor Books, 1966), fragment 71, p. 79. The verse structure has been consolidated in this quotation.

unisex soul reincarnated itself into different kinds of bodies, male or female, human or animal, a distinct woman's identity disappeared into a unisex world.

Aristotle, husband of Pythias, kept the uniqueness of a woman's identity, because he thought that human beings had only one life to live, but he argued that because of the natural superiority of the male human being, a perfect friendship does not extend to the relationship of husband and wife because of woman's natural inferiority to man, which rendered this inter-gender relationship to be a friendship between unequals.

del. [T]here is another kind of friendship, viz. that which involves an inequality between the parties, e.g.,... that of man to wife and in general that of ruler to subject. ... And these friendships differ also from each other; ... nor is that of husband to wife the same as that of wife to husband. For the virtue and function of each of these is different, and so are the reasons why they love; the love and the friendship are different also... . In all friendships implying inequality the love also should be proportional, i.e., the better should be more loved than he loves, and so should the more useful...; for when the love is in proportion to the merit of the parties, then in a sense arises equality, which is certainly held to be characteristic of friendship.⁶

At the same time as Aristotle made this error about women's unequal friendship with man, he also initiated the first extensive theoretical discussion of friendship, when he dedicated two full books of his *Nicomachean Ethics* to the topic. He began his discussion with the famous observation: "[F]riendship is virtue or implies virtue, and is besides most necessary with a view to living. For without friends no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods..."⁷

Aristotle argued further that if we could identify what it is that we love about our friend, we could distinguish between fundamentally three different kinds of friendships: those based on

⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1158b12-28.

⁷ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, Richard McKeon, ed. (New York: Random House, 1970), 1155a 3-5.

what is useful for us, those based on what is pleasant for us, and those which are based on what is good for the friend, or a virtuous friendship.⁸ There is nothing wrong per se with friendships based on pleasure or utility, according to Aristotle, but they are not permanent, nor are they established on a love of the good for the friend, nor on what is the true good for oneself, but rather on inferior goods, such as what is useful or pleasant for oneself.⁹

Aristotle argues that:

★ **Perfect friendship is the friendship of men who are good, and alike in virtue;** for these wish well alike to each other *qua* good, and they are good in themselves. Now those who wish well to their friends for their [friend's] sake are most truly friends; for they do this by reason of their own nature and not incidentally; therefore their friendship lasts as long as they are good—and goodness is an enduring thing.¹⁰

The goal of this kind of friendship is summarized: “as the virtuous man is to himself, he is to his friend also (for his friend is another self).”¹¹ { In “Aristotle on the Shared Life,” Nancy Sherman summarizes: “Happiness or good living is thus ascribable to me, not as an isolated individual, but as a self extended, so to speak, by friends.”¹² } These virtue-friendships turn out to be also useful

⁸ “There are therefore three kinds of friendship, equal in number to the things that are loveable; for with respect to each there is a mutual and recognized love, and those who love each other wish well to each other in that respect in which they love one another. Now those who love each other for their **utility** do not love each other for themselves but in virtue of some good which they get from each other. So too with those who love for the sake of **pleasure**; it is not for their character that men love ready witted people, but because they find them pleasant.” *Ibid.*, 1156a7-14. My emphasis

⁹ See James Bernard Murphy, “Virtue and the Good of Friendship,” *American Catholic Philosophical Association Proceedings*, vol. 71 (1997): 189-201, especially 193.

¹⁰ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1156b 6-12.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1170 b 6-7.

¹² Nancy Sherman, “Aristotle on the Shared Life,” in Neera Kapur Badhwar, ed, *Friendship: A Philosophical Reader* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), chapt. 5: 91-107,

and pleasant as well, although they are rare because they take time and familiarity.” Aristotle says

it colloquially: “[M]en cannot know each other till they have ‘eaten salt together.’”¹³

In the 1st c. B.C., Cicero, a Stoic philosopher, married to and divorced from both Terentia and Publilia, followed Aristotle’s understanding of the great value of friendships based on virtue. In his essay “On Friendship” Cicero stated: “Now friendship may be thus defined: a complete accord on all subjects human and divine, joined with mutual good will and affection.”¹⁴

He added to his definition a regulation that established its foundation solidly on virtue alone:

“Let this, then, be laid down as the first law of friendship, that we should ask from friends, and do for friends, only what is good.”¹⁵

There is a possibility that Cicero thought that his daughter Tullia was like another self to him before she died. Generally, however, he thought of friendships as occurring primarily among men who shared political and philosophical interests. Now Cicero thought that true friendship occurred primarily among men (male human beings): “In the face of a true friend a man sees as it were a second self.”¹⁶

here, 94. See also Paul Wadell, *Friendship and the Moral Life* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), “A Look at Aristotle’s Ethics” and “Aristotle on Friendship,” pp. 31-69.

¹³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1156b 26-27.

¹⁴ Cicero, *De Amiticia* “On Friendship,” in *Letters of Marcus Tullius Cicero with Treatises on Friendship and Old Age* (New York: P. F. Collier and Son, 1937), #6.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, #13.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, #7. Nancy Sherman points out that this view of a friend as another self is also present in Aristotle: “a virtue friend is ‘another self (*allos autos*), ‘another me’ (*allos egō*) as Aristotle strikingly puts it in the *Magna Moralia* (1213a13, 1213a24, NE 1170b7, EE 1245a30).”, in “Aristotle on the Shared Life,” 102.

By the 6th century B.C. already the Pythagoreans began to emphasize the importance of sustaining good friendships by growing in the virtue of temperance over erotic desires.

“Pythagoras taught very clearly friendship towards all by all...[and] of a man towards his wife.”¹⁷

A Neo-pythagorean woman Theano II, argued that friendship must be based on the virtue of the person loving and not be dependent on the virtue of the one loved. In her own words to a woman suffering from an unfaithful husband: “As for you, don’t build the friendship you owe your husband on his perfect virtue, because it is the good of the relationship which is its root.

Consider then that your husband visits a courtesan only out of vice, but that he is present beside you to live a common life with you; that he loves you by a thoughtful intention, but that he is attracted to this other woman only by passion.... [which] does not last long.”¹⁸

Medieval Christianity Built on and Transformed Pagan Views of Friendship

Jesus Christ brought God’s friendship to the world in a radically new way; and He elevated us into a new relationship with God, His Father through His friendship with us in the Holy Spirit. Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274) referred back to Aristotle to explain why the Incarnation of Jesus Christ helped overcome the previously radical inequality in the friendship between God and man: “Furthermore, since friendship consists in a certain equality, things

¹⁷ Cornelia J. de Vogel, *Pythagoras and Early Pythagoreanism: An Interpretation of Neglected Evidence on the philosopher Pythagoras* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1966), 100-101.

¹⁸ Kathleen Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers: A Complete Translation of the Fragments in Diels, Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956), Fragment 80, p. 30. See also, Sister Prudence Allen, RSM, *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution, 750B.C.- A.D. 1250* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), “Neo-Pythagoreansim”, p. 141-164. My emphasis.

greatly unequal seem unable to be coupled in friendship. Therefore, to get greater familiarity in friendship between man and God it was helpful for man that God became man, since even by nature man is man's friend [Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, 1 (1155a 15-25)].¹⁹ Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J., emphasizes this in his text on *The Priestly Office*, in stating that "Human beings, alienated from God by sin, were incapable of performing acts that would placate God and reestablish friendship and communion. God, however, took the initiative through the incarnation."²⁰

Consider how God reaches down to man's level to elevate us in St. Peter's well-known dialogue with the resurrected Jesus as it is recounted in the Gospel of *John* 21:15-17. Peter was asked three times whether he loves Jesus, and he answers that Jesus knows that he loves Him. While the same word 'love' is used throughout the English text, the Greek text opens up a deep inner dynamic depending upon whether the word (*philia*), which means friendship, is used and when (*agape*), which means charity, is used. When Jesus asks first: "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?", He uses the words '*ἀγαπᾶς με*' implying the love of charity. When Peter answers: "Yes, Lord,... you know that I love you," he uses the words '*φιλῶ σε*', implying the love of friendship. The second time, we find the same pattern: Jesus asks: "Do you love me (*ἀγαπᾶς με*)?"; and Peter answers: "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you (*φιλῶ σε*)."
The third time, Jesus changes his words to come down to Peter's level of the love of friendship in order to elevate him up into the charity of the Holy Trinity, when he asks: "Do you love me

¹⁹ Ibid., Book IV, chapt. 54, 6, p. 231.

²⁰ Avery Dulles, S.J., *The Priestly Office: A Theological Reflection* (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 31.

(φιλεῖς με)? And Peter answers “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you (φιλω σε)!”²¹ In this exchange of great import, Jesus and Peter reveal the richness of their mutual friendship which communicates the good for the other and participates in the sharing of divine charity.

de/ In this same remarkable dialogue Jesus sent Peter forth in his vocation with the mandate: “Take care of my lambs; take care of my sheep; take care of my sheep.” The communion of friendship-charity issued forth in his specific vocation and mission to serve others in the Church as Priest and as Pope. We recall here the words of John Paul II that we read at the beginning of this presentation: “These [paradigmatic] vocations are also at the service of one another, for the growth of the Body of Christ in history and for its mission in the world.”²²

St. Thomas Aquinas, the “Doctor of Humanity,”²³ elaborated in detail four essential characteristics of Christian friendship and affirmed the great value of friendship for human persons. In Question 23 of Part II-II of the *Summa Theologica* Thomas asked: Whether Charity is Friendship? He answered that true friendship has the following four essential characteristics: (1) that good or benevolence is wished for the friend and not primarily for oneself through a kind of

²¹ *The New Testament: Greek and English*, eds. Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, et al. (New York: American Bible Society, second edition 1968).

²² John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata* (Quebec: Médiaspaul, 1996), #31. John Paul II stated that: “The vocations to the lay life, to the ordained ministry and to the consecrated life can be considered **paradigmatic**, inasmuch as **all particular vocations**, considered separately or as a whole, are in one way or another **derived from them** or **lead back to them**, in accordance with the richness of God’s gift. These vocations are also **at the service of one another**, for the growth of the Body of Christ in history and for its mission in the world.”

²³ John Paul II Apostolic Letter *Inter Munera Academicarum* (January 28, 1999), #4. Throughout the paper, I have used **bold** to highlight the words **friend** and **friendship** in primary texts.

concupiscence; (2) that it is a mutual love between both friends, and not one-sided; (3) that it is founded on some kind of communication; and (4) that it is a form of charity.²⁴

In the *Summa Theologica* the Dominican Thomas, elaborated in detail the relation of Christian friendship-charity to Aristotelian natural friendship. In the following paragraph we see the four essential characteristics of Christian friendship beautifully expressed.

According to the Philosopher [Aristotle in] (*Ethic.* viii, 2,3), not every love has the character of friendship, but that love which is together with benevolence, when, to wit, [1] **we love someone so as to wish good to him**. If, however, we do not wish good to what we love, but wish its good for ourselves, (thus we are said to love wine, or a horse, or the like) it is love not of friendship, but of a kind of concupiscence. For it would be absurd to speak of having friendship for wine or for a horse. Yet neither does well-wishing suffice for friendship, for [2] **a certain mutual love is requisite**, since friendship is between friend and friend: and this well-wishing is [3] **founded on some kind of communication**.

Accordingly, since there is a communication between man and God, inasmuch as He communicates His happiness to us, some kind of friendship must needs be based on this same communication... . The love which is based on this communication, is charity: wherefore it is evident that [4] **charity is the friendship of man for God**.²⁵

Charles Schleck, C.S.C., uses theological categories in his book on *The Theology of Vocations* to describe the Thomistic view of the relation of charity, vocation, and friendship:

Since **charity is defined as friendship**, its presence in the soul sets up a relation of intimacy with the three divine Persons....

Charity is the bond of perfection and, like a bond, permeates the entire structure, solidifying it, giving it its own strength and its own form, by impressing upon the whole structure its own spirit and vitality, insofar as it draws all the other virtues and their acts into itself.²⁶

²⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster, Md: Christian Classics, 1948), 5 vols, Vol.III. I-II, Q. 23.

²⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Vol.III. I-II, Q. 23.

²⁶ Charles A. Schleck, C.S.C., *The Theology of Vocations* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1963), 92.

All Christian life flows from Trinitarian Life through Baptism and the indwelling of the Holy Trinity. Charity is the infusion of God's love, which is Trinitarian and communal, and it calls us into the friendship of charity shared among the Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity. It moves us towards communion impelled by the Holy Spirit.

This movement is traditionally described as a journey, in which we are like pilgrims or wayfarers. Along this journey within our particular place in the space/time continuum, we will pass through our own death, towards eternal life (we hope) with God and the communion of saints. St. Thomas argues that during this pilgrimage we are called to grow in the friendship of charity:

The charity of the wayfarer can increase. For we are called wayfarers by reason of our being on the way to God, who is our Last End or beatitude. On this way we draw near to God, who is ... **approached by the affections of the mind...** . It pertains therefore to the very notion of the charity of a wayfarer that it can increase... ²⁷

Etienne Gilson uses philosophical categories to further describe the Thomistic relation of friendship and love:

Because love has dealings with reason... The object [of love] which is thus freely chosen can be desired for its very great value...which renders it eminently worthy of being loved; the sentiment experienced in this case is called *charity*.... [A] love [which] has lasted sufficiently long to have become rather like a permanent disposition of the soul, a habit; in this case love is called friendship.²⁸

Philosophers describe a progression in a person from a particular act, to repeated acts of the same kind, to becoming a good (or bad) habit, to the integration of this habit with a kind of

²⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II Q. 24, art.4. This translation is from Schleck, *ibid.*, 93.

²⁸ Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, (New York: Random House, 1956), 273. Gilson's italics, my bold for emphasis.

permanence into one's character as a virtue or vice. Gilson describes friendship as a **habit** of charity towards the person we love as a friend.

When we trace different phases of development of friendship in the western world, we discover that the first three of these essential characteristics were already present in a natural form in the work of the pagan philosophers Aristotle and Cicero, but the fourth characteristic was supernaturally infused through Divine Trinitarian Love revealed by Jesus Christ and communicated by the Holy Spirit into the hearts of Christian friends. Women and men lived out Christian friendships in complementary ways according to each one's vocation and unique personality.²⁹

It is reasonable to ask, how friends relate to our particular vocation? Do some friendships help or harm our living out this call? Do our friendships elevate our lives, or do they lower our standards? Consider the letter of James which says that “Abraham ... was called the friend of God” because he believed God and was righteous or just towards God.³⁰ This is an elevated notion of friendship between unequals, between a man and God. It elevated the man by a free human act bringing about a union of minds and wills and by giving to God what was justly due. In Exodus, we learn that, “The Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to a friend.”³¹ In the Book of Sirach, we read further that a good friendship with God elevates a

²⁹My emphasis. For a description of the **spousal dimension** of the three paradigm vocations see, Sr. Mary Prudence Allen, R.S.M., “Catholic Marriage and Feminism,” in Kenneth D. Whitehead, *The Church, Marriage and the Family* (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2007), chapter 7: 95-144.

³⁰ *James*, 2:23, RSV Version. My emphasis. All Scripture is taken from the Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition.

³¹ *Exodus*, 33:11.

person: “There is nothing so precious as a faithful friend, and no scales can measure his excellence. A faithful friend is an elixir of life; and those who fear the Lord will find him.

Whoever fears the Lord directs his friendship aright, for as he is, so is his neighbor also.” to grow in Christian friendship through their particular vocation often has a hard path to follow before

achieving its goal. In his Confessions, St. Augustine, (5th c.), who had been converted to love for philosophy by Cicero, describes in great detail his pre-Christian phase of friendship with Alypius. del

Both Augustine and Alypius had a serious difficulty with addiction, that interfered with their being able to accept their vocations to the priesthood. Augustine was addicted to sexual pleasure, and could not accept the call to a life of celibacy. Not only had he lived outside of marriage with one woman for ten years, but, after becoming engaged to another woman, who was too young to marry, he took on another mistress in the interim. Augustine describes his friend’s response:

“Alypius could not understand how it was that I, of whom, he thought so highly, could be so firmly caught in the toils of sexual pleasure... . He was amazed at my state of bondage.”³² Alypius confronted Augustine with his addiction, and waited by his side as he eventually broke through this impasse to follow his vocation.

Alypius for his part was addicted to violent gladiator games. [At first Augustine, as his teacher, gave an example in class, which “would make a laughing-stock of those who were under the spell of this insane sport, [and] Alypius took my words to heart...” But later Alypius, presumptuously thinking he had overcome his addiction, fell again “and his soul was stabbed with a wound more deadly than any which the gladiator, who he was so anxious to see, had received

³² Augustine, *Confessions* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1981), Book VI, 12, p, 129.

in his body.”³³ While he was still a student of Augustine’s, he had a close call with the law, which cured him of his addiction. Augustine described Alypius’ weaknesses but then concluded: “These were the qualities I knew in Alypius, who was my close friend and, like myself, was perplexed to know what course of life we ought to follow.”³⁴ As is well known, they both became diocesan priests and bishops full of zeal for the renewal and development of the Church. They had indeed “tasted salt-together” as Aristotle had recommended. Once confirmed in his vocation as Diocesan Priest and Bishop of Hippo, North Africa, Augustine served both the laity through his elaboration of their call to elevate the world especially through the secular vocation to political life³⁵ and consecrated religious through his *Rule*, which stills serves as the foundation for many religious communities.³⁶

Sister Marie Aquinas McNamara, OP says in her book, *Friends and Friendship for Saint Augustine*, that “Saint Augustine...was endowed with a genius for friendship...”³⁷ He sought to Christianize friendship so that it extended outwards to others: “...because friendship is rooted in Christian love, it is not confined within the narrow limits of a small circle. On the contrary, ‘it

³³ Ibid., Book VI, 7-8, pp, 120-123.

³⁴ Ibid., Book VI, 7, 10, p. 125.

³⁵ See Augustine’s *The City of God* (Garden City, N. Y: Image Books, 1958) and the properly secular culture of the lay vocation reaffirmed by John Paul II, *Cristifideles Laici*, #15-16.

³⁶ See Agatha Mary, s.p.b., *The Rule of Saint Augustine: An Essay in Understanding* (Villanova, PA: Augustinian Press, 1992). See also John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata*, #1.

³⁷ Sister Marie Aquinas McNamara, O.P., *Friends and Friendship for Saint Augustine* (New York: Alba House, 1957), 240.

must include all those to whom love and affection are due, although it goes more readily to some, and more slowly to others, but it reaches even our enemies, for whom we are commanded to pray.”³⁸ Not only does friendship extend in space, but Augustine described friendship as overcoming the temporal limits of death, by moving forward into the perfection of friendship in eternal life. “There is no true friendship unless You (God) weld it between souls that cleave together through that charity which is shed in our hearts by the Holy [Spirit] who is given to us.”³⁹

In the 12th century, Aelred of Rievaulx, a Cistercian monk, wrote extensively about friendships among men in consecrated religious life. In his classic text entitled *Spiritual Friendship*, Aelred followed Augustine’s lead in viewing Christian friendship on earth as preparation for friendship in heaven:

del [This is that extraordinary and great happiness which we await, with God himself acting and diffusing, between himself and his creatures whom he has uplifted, among the very degrees and orders which he has distinguished, among the individual souls whom he has chosen, so much friendship and charity, that thus each loves another as he does himself; and that, by this means, just as each one rejoices in his own, so does he rejoice in the good fortune of another, and thus the happiness of each one individually is the happiness of all, and the universality of all happiness is the possession of each individual. There one finds no hiding of thoughts, no dissembling of affection. This is true and

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 232.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 237. See also Paul J. Waddell’s summary. “McNamara notes four distinguishing marks to Augustine’s understanding of friendship. First the author and giver of friendship is God. Second, friendship must be rooted in God and seek God. Third, Christian friendship is transformed by grace. Fourth, it does not end with the Kingdom, but there reaches its perfection when everyone has perfect friendship with God.”, *Friendship and the Moral Life* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), p. 97.

eternal friendship, which begins in this life and is perfected in the next, which here belongs to the few where few are good, but there belongs to all where all are good.⁴⁰

Aelred's text, which is a three part dialogue among various friends in the monastery, uses many distinctions already common to the classical literature on friendship from Aristotle, Cicero, and Augustine, but he adds some new ones as well. For example, he elaborates on five ways identified in the book of Sirach, by which a friendship may be destroyed: upbraiding, reproach, pride, disclosing of secrets to another, or giving a treacherous wound to the friend.⁴¹ Then he adds a sixth, namely that if a friend injures someone you are bound to love.⁴²

Aelred distinguishes false friendships from true friendships: "Hence let one kind of friendship be called carnal, another worldly, and another spiritual. The carnal springs from mutual harmony in vice; the worldly is enkindled by the hope of gain; and the spiritual is cemented by similarity of life, morals, and pursuits among the just."⁴³ One can hear the echo of Aristotle's and Cicero's three kinds of friendships, here, but Aelred christianizes the good kind of friendship or spiritual friendship as "a mutual conformity in matters human and divine united with benevolence and charity."⁴⁴ He concludes that spiritual friendship is the only kind worthy of the name of friendship. Friendships must be tested over the years and in religious life, in a monastery where people live a common life for many years together, there is ample opportunity

⁴⁰ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1977), Book III, 79, p. 111.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, III, 23, p. 96.

⁴² *Ibid.*, III, 46, p. 102.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, I, 38, p. 59.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, I, 46, p. 61.

to discover through testing which friendships are worthy of the name. In religious life Aelred concludes:

And thus a friend praying to Christ on behalf of his friend, and for his friend's sake desiring to be heard by Christ, directs his attention with love and longing to Christ; then it sometimes happens that quickly and imperceptibly the one love passes over into the other, and coming, as it were, into close contact with the sweetness of Christ himself, the friend begins to taste his sweetness and to experience his charm. Thus ascending from that holy love with which he embraces a friend to that with which he embraces Christ, he will joyfully partake in abundance of the spiritual fruit of friendship, awaiting the fullness of all things in the life to come.⁴⁵

There have been multiple examples of spiritual friendships among members of religious communities and among men and women religious of different institutions. Wendy Wright has given a detailed account of the spiritual friendship of St. Jeanne de Chantal and St. François de Sales (17th c. France) in *Bond of Perfection*. What is striking about her account is the intense combination of spiritual friendships of virtue, charity, and deep affectivity which flourished between the 12th and 17th centuries. Wendy Wright summarizes the spiritual maternity and paternity that flourished ("They gave birth, as it were, to each other.")⁴⁶ through their love of Christ as calling them to work together in their complement vocations. This work of chaste friendship, not unlike the work of husband and wife, issued not only in their mutual sanctification, but also in the spiritual fruit of their cooperative founding of the Order of Visitation, for teaching nuns:

⁴⁵ Ibid., III, 133-134, p. 131. In the 11th- 12th century St. Anselm, a Benedictine monk, writes about just this dynamic in his "Prayer for Friends," in *The Prayers and Meditations of St. Anselm* (Penguin Paperback, 1973), chapter 18.

⁴⁶ Wendy M. Wright, *Bond of Perfection: Jeanne de Chantal and François de Sales* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1985), 207.

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Coupled with this creativity their friendship also exhibited the singleness of purpose and vision so aptly symbolized in the celibate state. They knew a deeply human love, a love that made full use of all the dynamics inherent in itself, but their love did not become an end in itself. The energies of their love were gathered up into exquisitely actualized pure love of God... [which] transformed those 'lower' forms into itself. ... This friendship that Jeanne de Chantel and François de Sales shared was known to their contemporaries, at least in its outlines.⁴⁷

Another different kind of example can be found in the relations of Ven. Catherine McAuley (19th c) with her Sisters of Mercy. Here we can see the rich and dynamic flourishing of women-to women spiritual friendships in a religious institute of active sisters in the apostolates of nursing, education, and protection of young women in Ireland. In her *Retreat Conferences*, she describes the root of all spiritual friendship, spousal union with Christ:

Yet we cannot better describe the spiritual union a religious contracts, the union with Jesus Christ, than by representing it under the form of the union contracted by matrimony. In order to be happy, there must be a communication of goods; no separate interests, views, or profits can exist after two persons marry. One heart, one sentiment seems to animate both. What one thinks, both think... There is an entire surrender of the will and affections, so that united they are at all times ready to be separated from the whole world rather than from each other. Nor is this considered at all unnatural.⁴⁸

This intimate love-bond with Jesus Christ, flows outwards from one sister in the community to another. Catherine McAuley describes the intertwining of charity and friendship in such a way that the full integration of the sister's personality is affected:

If we love God, we will undoubtedly love our neighbor also; they are as cause and effect. Jesus Christ counsels us to love our neighbor as ourselves. Now, nothing is more certain than that we desire for ourselves every spiritual and temporal advantage, and we love everything that contributes to it. Then to fulfill Christ's command, we should with equal

⁴⁷ Ibid., see also the Introduction for a lengthy list of other inter-gender spiritual friendships., 10-31.

⁴⁸ Mother Mary Catherine McAuley, *Retreat Instructions*, ed., Sister Mary Teresa Purcell (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1952), 141.

ardor desire the same for our neighbor. In vain do we say we love our sisters if we do not show by our acts that we really love them. Banish from your heart all coldness, aversion, and reserve, for it is not sufficient not to dislike our sisters in our hearts but we must have a warm, cordial affection for all and manifest it by words, action, and manner. In fine, our charity must be in our hearts and from our hearts, and a charity such as Jesus Christ practiced while on earth.... He reserved it for His last discourse and dying injunction, "Love one another as I have loved you." The words of a parent or friend when about to leave us never fail to make a lasting impression and have been known to effect the greatest conversion.⁴⁹

The Correspondence of Catherine McAuley: 1818-1841 provides many letters which reveal among the Religious Sisters of Mercy the four essential characteristics of friendship that Thomas Aquinas identified. The letters are full of attention for the good of one another, of the mutual friendship among particular sisters and their foundress Catherine McAuley, of frequent methods of communication with one another, and of the infusion of charity uniquely expressed with humor, personality, seriousness, and joy.⁵⁰

In an outstanding recent book by John Cuddeback, entitled *Friendship: The Art of Happiness*, the author takes Aristotle's and St. Thomas's teaching about virtuous friendships and with wonderful contemporary examples demonstrates how seeking and practicing virtuous friendships is a central part of every vocation. In his words: "We have characterized true friendship as a relationship between two persons who, wanting what is best for one another and working for each others' good, share their lives together.... Spousal life lived to its fullness implies living a true friendship."⁵¹

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 146-48.

⁵⁰ Mary C. Sullivan, *The Correspondence of Catherine McAuley: 1818-1841* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004).

⁵¹ John Cuddeback, *Friendship: The Art of Happiness* (Greeley, Colorado: Epic, 2003), 90. *His emphasis.*

Friendship and the Vocation to Sacramental Marriage among the Laity

In the 11th c., Hildegard of Bingen, the Benedictine Abbess, in writing about the creation of man and woman according to *Genesis*, introduced the theme that: “Man and woman are in this way so involved with each other that one of them is the work of the other [opus alterum per alterum]. Without woman, man could not be called man; without man, woman could not be named woman.”⁵² Jean Bethke Elshtain, in reflecting on this passage adds: “The co-creation of man and woman in relation to one another (each as the ‘work’ of the other, in Hildegard’s terms), is not an image of blissful harmony, an unlittered landscape of indistinguishable oneness.... This complementary relationship will, at times, be one of struggle as men and women ‘work’ one another, grappling with sameness and difference.”⁵³ The simultaneous tension of fundamental equality of dignity and worth with significant difference is the foundation for integral gender complementarity, a philosophical and theological position that underlies the way women and men enter into relations of friendship and marriage with one another.⁵⁴

⁵² Hildegard of Bingen, *Book of Divine Works* (Sante Fe, New Mexico: Bear and Company, 1987), Vision Four:100, p. 123. See also Prudence Allen, “Sex and Gender Differentiation in Hildegard of Bingen and Edith Stein, *Communio* 20 (Summer, 1993): 390-414.

⁵³ Jean Bethke Elshtain, “Ethical Equality in a New Feminism,” in Michele M. Schumacher, ed, *Women in Christ: Toward a New Feminism* (Grand Rapids, Mi.; Eedrmans, 2004), 285-296, here 290.

⁵⁴ In the Catholic Renaissance married men and women began to write about the different ways they tried to live out this relationship. See, for example Fancesco Barbaro’s (1390-1454) book on marriage (*De re uxoria*) in which he argued: “Now let us speak of conjugal love, the greatest efficacy and dignity whereof (as worthy men assure us), in a manner expressing the pattern of a perfect friendship....” Francesco Barbaro, *Directions for Love and Marriage* (London: John Leigh, 1677), p. 68. The text has been rendered into modern English by the author. For a detailed discussion of Barbaro and others see, Sister Prudence Allen, R.S.M., *The Concept of Woman: The Early Humanist Reformation* (Grand Rapids, Mi: Eerdman, 2002), pp

In the 13th c. Saint Thomas transformed Aristotle's understanding of the unequal friendship of husband and wife. Now for Thomas, the grace of Baptism renders all men and women equal in dignity and worth. Even though Thomas appeals directly to Aristotle to support his claim that friendship demands equality, he applies this equality directly to husband and wife:

“Besides, friendship consists in an equality [See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII (1157b 360)]. So, if it is not lawful for the wife to have several husbands... it would not be lawful, on the other hand, for a man to have several wives, for the friendship of wife for husband would not be free, but somewhat servile.”⁵⁵ Thomas continued by directly introducing the notion of virtue into his consideration of the friendship of husband and wife: “Furthermore, strong friendship is not possible in regard to many people, as is evident from the Philosopher in *Ethics* VIII [6 (1158a 10)]. Therefore, if a wife has but one husband, but the husband has several wives, the friendship will not be equal on both sides. So, the friendship will not be free, but servile in some way.”⁵⁶

Thomas further elaborates on the strength of the friendship of husband and wife, when he describes its multiple bases: “Furthermore, the greater that friendship is, the more solid and long-lasting will it be. Now, there seems to be the greatest friendship between husband and wife, for they are united (not only) in the act of fleshly union, which produces a certain gentle association even among beasts, but also in the partnership of the whole range of domestic activity.”⁵⁷

722, ff.

⁵⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* (Garden City: New York: Image Books, 1960), III, chapt. 124, 4, p. 152. My emphasis.

⁵⁶ Ibid., chapter 124, 5, p. 152.

⁵⁷ Ibid., chapt. 123, 6, p. 148. My emphasis.

When Thomas discusses the relation of husband and wife in the **Sacrament** of Marriage, he emphasizes the enduring basis for the union, a basis that is only present when the friendship is based on attention to the good of both friends:

Since, then, the union of husband and wife gives a sign of the union of Christ and the Church, that which makes the sign must correspond to that whose sign it is. Now, the union of Christ and the Church is a union of one to one to be held forever... Necessarily, then, matrimony as a sacrament of the Church is a union of one man to one woman to be held indivisibly, and this is included in the faithfulness by which the man and wife are bound to one another.⁵⁸

For Thomas the friendship of husband and wife can fulfill the four characteristics of authentic friendship by being (1) oriented towards the good of the friend, (2) being a mutual love, (3) necessitating communication, and (4) being a form of charity.

Same Gender and Inter-gender Friendships among the Laity outside of Marriage

Husbands and wives also had other kinds of friendships, namely, friendships among men, and friendships among women. Not only do a husband and wife grow in virtue through their great friendship with one another, but their vocation to marriage may be enhanced by good friends of the same gender.

One extraordinary example of women-women friendships based on virtue is found in letters written by Laura Cereta, the 15th century Christian humanist from Brescia, Italy. Cereta expressed the best of virtue friendships in her humanist correspondence. In one letter Cereta wrote to her friend Marcella while still grieving at the death of her husband:

I work on. I am restless, and I cannot stand myself because I lost so quickly my companion, the most beloved and precious part of me. But it is dangerous to grieve in this

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, Book IV, chapt. 78, 5, p. 296.

way. For the Epicureans believe that the wise man finds contentment in himself, that virtue is sweeter than any friend, and that our happiness proceeds not from any pleasure, or husband, or wealth, but from virtue... Friendship doesn't look either for what brings advantage or what follows from it.⁵⁹

Cereta wrote extensively about friendship-charity which forgives wrongs. In a letter addressed to "Santa Pelegrina," she reveals her willingness to fight for friendship with a woman from whom she had become estranged.

del Those men who have written about friendship [Cicero] have one thought: they see it as a bond that is both extraordinary and by law itself lifelong, since it springs from the very font of honor. And no wonder, for ethics is that state of being useful which is also honorable. The thing all men seek, however, is what is useful. And so friendship, though extraordinary in its ethical dimensions and life-long in its physical aspect, is disregarded among human desires. Since this is the case, a certain torpor of thought sets in, and all of the esteem we have for friends ebbs and flows back to the place whence it originally came. Thus, though the seed of mutual love was sown between us had already grown strong from a deep root of honor, it suddenly died, as if sucked dry in ground with out water...

The problem and its solution look to you to say why there has been an interruption in so important a cultivation. Am I to believe that you think that the divine law of friendship is about the law of flattery and gifts? What did you really think you would achieve with so long a silence, though not one on my part? Still if I can be accepted as an arbiter in this situation, I would refuse both flattery and gifts, because both are false tokens, since virtue can neither be counterfeited nor bought. What is more, it is close to impossible to divert virtue from its course.

But if you have anything to say that would refute my complaints, I am asking you, trusting in your wisdom, to write it in a long and elaborate letter. Still, I want this whole matter to be put to rest, and I want this plea of mine to succeed. Only the truth should be taken into consideration, since in our situation it is the case that each one of us would aim to teach, not to defeat the other. For what can it mean for a friend to be victorious over her friend?

There is no place for us to hold a debate, as Carneades did when, taking dubious and inextricable positions in the gymnasium, he argued first on the side of the Stoics and then against them. The question you raise has to be debated, not mocked or belittled, so that the sacred pledge of our loyalty and respect for one another, though now beaten and broke, can be healed, and so that everything—once the sickness in our thoughts about one another has been medicated— may soon be right again between us.

⁵⁹ Laura Cereta, (October 6, 1486), *Laura Cereta: Collected Letters of a Renaissance Feminist*, Diana Robin, ed. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 132.

del I am so concerned about you that nothing is more precious to me than my being loved by you, who are the most beloved of friends. If you were ever to catch me in some wrongdoing, I have no doubt at all, since you are a person of the utmost kindness, that you would be compassionate and forgiving. After all, this is the hallmark of one's humanity: the ability to recognize one's weakness. Therefore dismiss the thought of a quarrel as the result of our difference of opinion. After all, which of us would inflict a punishment on the other, when she might not know the other's heart equally, and when there could be a mutual exchange between pure minds that are inextricably connected in every way?⁶⁰

The Renaissance offers many examples of close friendships that were sustained by correspondence and frequent visits in one another's homes.

A well-known example of male-male friendships occurred between St. Thomas More and Erasmus.⁶¹ James McEvoy states that: "Of the total of two hundred and seventy letters by More which survive, Erasmus was the addressee of about one-sixth, making him the principal correspondent of the former."⁶² For a glimpse into the motivation of his correspondent, Erasmus had written in 1506, that "Christianity is nothing else than true and perfect friendship."⁶³ The habit of fostering friendship through correspondence among Renaissance Catholics offers a creative model for contemporary diocesan priests, who are often separated from friends made during seminary days. Today, perhaps, in stead of the letter, correspondents use email, blogs, the telephone, text messages to supplement the less frequent occasions of face-to-face dialogue.

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⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, (February 26, 1486), pp.136-38.

⁶¹ For an excellent study of this topic see James McEvoy, "The Theory of Friendship in Erasmus and Thomas More," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 80, no 2 (spring, 2006): 227-252. See also two texts referred to: Ullrich. Langer, *Perfect Friendship: Studies in Literature and Moral Philosophy from Boccaccio to Corneille* (Geneva: Droz, 1993) and David Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁶² McEvoy, "The Theory of Friendship in Erasmus and Thomas More", 247.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

Erasmus, a cleric, described More, a married lay man, in the following way: “**Friendship** **he seems born and designed for**; no one is more open-hearted in making friends or more tenacious in keeping them, nor has he any fear of that plethora of friendships against which Hesiod warns us. The road to a secure place in his affections is open to anyone... . In a word, whoever desires a perfect example of **true friendship** will seek it nowhere to better purpose than in More.”⁶⁴ One of the reasons that More and Erasmus invested so much of their energy and thought into building and fostering their mutual friendship relates directly to their shared views of the eschatological dimension of Christian friendship. McEvoy summarizes More’s articulation of this eternal reality of friendship: “As friends here on earth, we may hope to be merry together forever in heaven. This is the eschatological ideal of friendship which more would doubtless have retained from his study of, in particular [Augustine’s] *De civitate Dei*.”⁶⁵

The depth of More’s vocation to martyrdom also includes an awareness on his part of the vocational dimension of friendship, which extended even to his enemies. More’s last words to the judges who had condemned him to death were: “More have I not to say, my lords, yet that like the Blessed Apostle St. Paul ... was present, and consented to the death of St. Stephen, and kept their clothes that stoned him to death, and yet be they now both together Holy Saints in heaven, and shall continue there friends for ever, so I verily trust and shall therefore right heartily pray, that though your lordships have now here on earth been judges to my

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 243.

condemnation, may we yet hereafter in heaven merrily meet together to our everlasting salvation.”⁶⁶

This speech of St. Thomas More reveals a great mystery of Christian friendship, namely that Jesus Christ, in his friendship with a particular person, walks with him at certain times during his pilgrimage on earth as he prepares for the next life in heaven. John Paul II, in his 1984 Apostolic Letter *On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering*, describes it this way:

Down through the centuries and generations it has been seen that in suffering there is concealed a particular power that draws a person interiorly close to Christ, a special grace...It is He—as the interior Master and Guide—who reveals to the suffering brother and sister this wonderful interchange, situated at the very heart of the mystery of Redemption....

That is not all: the divine Redeemer wishes to penetrate the soul of every sufferer through the heart of His holy Mother...⁶⁷

Thus, for Christian wayfarers, friendship with Christ leads to friendship with Mary or it may begin with Mary and led to Christ. It is not surprising, then that John Paul II, describes Mary as “The Mother of God at the Center of the Pilgrim Church.”⁶⁸ She is the “pilgrim guide,” a maternal spiritual friend who has made the human pilgrimage ahead of us, and who can now lead the way for us. The final prayer to Mary states: “How wonderfully far God has gone, the Creator and Lord of all things, in the ‘revelation of himself’ to man!” and it leads the reader in the footnote to the following words of *Dei Verbum*: “Through this revelation... the invisible God...”

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 245, referring to “William Roper and Nicholas Harpsfield: Lives of St. Thomas More,” ed. E.E. Reynolds, p. 47. My emphasis and putting into modern English.

⁶⁷ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris, On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering* (1984), #26.

⁶⁸ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater, Mother of the Redeemer*, (1987), #25.

out of the abundance of his love speaks to men as friends... and lives among them....., so that he may invite and take them into fellowship with himself⁶⁹

Some Distortions of Friendship in the Modern and Contemporary World

The first distortion is the reduction of virtue-friendships to utility and pleasure-based friendships; with the pleasure usually incorporating sexual or concupiscible pleasures, often in relations of adultery. In other words, friendships are emptied of virtue. Rousseau's *Confessions* are replete with personal examples of his own friendships which follow this distinctive pattern.⁷⁰ Recent books about various salons in France offer several examples of similar destruction of virtue friendships among married men and women⁷¹. It is common knowledge that this approach to friendship exploded with the sexual revolution in the United States in the 1960's. It is still permeating the minds and actions of many men and women, gaining further distortions through so-called "post-Christian" theorists.⁷² This approach confuses love with sexual pleasure, and as Aristotle pointed out so long ago, friendships based on the affective sexual pleasures or utility alone do not last, nor do they make the friends good. Quite the contrary, they tend to lead the friends to increasing lives of shared vice.

A second erroneous response to the Cartesian fragmentation of the person and of relationships was to empty out friendship from any reference to particular love. In this pattern, friendships are emptied of natural affection. Immanuel Kant puts it this way:

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, # 51. with footnote 147 to Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, # 2.

⁷⁰ *The Confessions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (The Bibliophilist Society, 1910)

⁷¹ See for example, John J. Conley, S.J., *The Suspicion of Virtue: Women Philosophers in Neoclassical France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

⁷² See the works of for example, Michele Foucault, Mary Daly, Luce Irigaray among others.

Friendship (considered in its perfection) is the union of two persons through equal and mutual love and respect. ... Hence men have a **duty of friendship**— The striving for perfect friendship (as the maximum good in the attitude of friends to each other) is a duty **imposed by reason**—not, indeed, an ordinary duty but a duty of honor. Yet it is easy to see that [perfect] friendship is a mere Idea (although a practically necessary one), which cannot be achieved in practice. For in his relations with his neighbor how can a man ascertain whether one of the attitudes essential to this duty (e.g, mutual benevolence) is equal on the part of both friends?⁷³

In this view, friendship is the opposite of a passionate sexual relationship contravening fidelity in marriage. Instead Kant's view of moral friendship is an **affection-empty duty**. Kant distinguishes moral friendship, based on duty, from emotional friendship, based on natural affections, and he concludes that, like the black swan, it "exists here and there in its perfection."⁷⁴

H.J. Paton tries to point out that "Kant's so-called practical love [which] consists in doing cold services to others for the sake of duty... is a misunderstanding of what he means;" and Paton adds that "Emotional love is ...a predisposition necessary for the concept of practical love as a duty."⁷⁵ However, the popular understanding of Kant is that he fragmented reason from passions or affections, and emptied close friendships from the natural affection that usually accompany them. Thus, Kierkegaard satirized Kant's approach in his description of the ethical stages of life. In Stages on Life's Way, Observations about Marriage, the married man like a judge loves his wife simply because it is his duty to do so, and not because of any natural affection.⁷⁶ In the "Or" of *Either/ Or* the ethical man, a judge assessor states: "He who regards friendship ethically

⁷³ Immanuel Kant, *The Doctrine of Virtue*, Part II of *The Metaphysic of Morals* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964), p. 140.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁷⁵ H.J. Paton, "Kant on Friendship" in Badhwar, ed. *Friendship: A Philosophical Reader*, 133-154, here, 137-38.

⁷⁶ Soren Kierkegaard describes an exaggerated form of duty in *Stages on Life's Way* (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), pp. 104-178.

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sees it as a duty. I might therefore say that it is every man's duty to have a friend."⁷⁷ Instead of the rich understanding of intense Christian friendships in the Catholic tradition, Kierkegaard absolutizes the mandate. In *Works of Love* he concludes: "Love to one's neighbour is therefore eternal equality in loving, but eternal equality is the opposite of exclusive love or preference.... Equality is just this, not to make distinctions, and eternal equality is absolutely not to make the slightest distinction, is unqualifiedly not to make the slightest distinction."⁷⁸

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Vocations to the married life, priesthood, and religious life have been affected for the worse by these opposing kinds of deterioration in the living of friendship and love, either too much focus on particular emotional attachments or the emptying out of all mutual affection.. In recent scandals related to the inability to live well the call to promised or vowed celibacy or to promised fidelity to the spouse to whom one is married indicate the great need for a re-evangelization about the true nature of Christian friendship and love, and their essential place in living a particular vocation. Particular friendships were often prohibited in religious life out of a fear of divisiveness, cliquishness, and of same gender sexual relationships. This often led to a deadening of the capacity for genuine love and friendship, which would be at the same time full of Christian charity. Thus, Kierkegaard's literary Either/Or (either relations based on sexual pleasure or on empty rational duty) was acted out in many who lost the true understanding of virtue-based Christian friendship. Kierkegaard himself remained isolated and alone, incapable of sustaining friendships.

The third way that Cartesian fragmentation of the human person affected virtue-based friendships occurred through the emptying out of charity from all friendship. Nietzsche, who also was unable to sustain friendships through out his life, remained isolated and alone, like Zarathustra. He argued that a friend was extraneous, that one should view his friend primarily as

⁷⁷ Soren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* (Princeton, New Jersey: University of Princeton Press, 1959), 327.

⁷⁸ Soren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), 70.

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one's best enemy, and that women were altogether incapable of friendship.⁷⁹ Nietzsche instead
delighted in his own will to power which enabled him to crush the weak and to attack the strong
through perpetual self-overcoming. Another example of the combined emptying of affections and
of charity from friendship can be seen in Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre, who agreed
that their friendship would be permanent, based on an intellectual commitment, while
simultaneously engaging in pleasure-based friendships with several other men and women. The
effects of this fragmentation of the self and of friendship love for one another are only too
evident in the personal descriptions they gave of their lives and their dying.⁸⁰

Friendship in Contemporary Catholic Thought: Reaffirmed as Essential-Reintegration

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How has the modern disintegration in the philosophy of the human person and inter-
personal relationships affected the vocations of men and women today? Rev. C.J. McCloskey
recently identified a difficulty he observed among Catholic lay men and priests, which he calls
“Friendship Deficit Syndrome” (FDS).⁸¹ McCloskey describes the way in which American
men seem to be enjoying being together, watching a sporting event, or some other kind of thing,
but “still there seems often to be a deeper dimension of friendship that is missing.”⁸² He also
describes some Catholic priests, who “having been disillusioned by paternal abandonment, or the
example of priests’ infidelity to their vocation, find themselves **incapable of giving or receiving**”

⁷⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (New York: Penguin, 1988), “Of the Friend,” 55-57.

⁸⁰ See for example, Simone de Beauvoir, *Adieux: A Farewell to Sartre* (New York: Penguin, 1981), 118-127 and *Conversations with Sartre*, 275-280.

⁸¹ C.J. McCloskey, “Friendship: The Key to the Evangelization of Men,” *Catholic Men’s Quarterly* (summer 2004): 9-12, here 9.

⁸² *Ibid.*

del trust and healing affection that is essential to forming deep and lasting friendships.”⁸³ Fr. McCloskey then calls for a new evangelization of men towards Christian friendship, that draws from the “most sublime, perfect, and eternal ‘friendship’ between the Persons of the Trinity, expressed eternally and through the coming of the Son of God, which is communicated to us afterwards in a permanent way through the sanctifying Spirit: Love given, Love received, Love shared.”⁸⁴

ENDOW study groups have as a secondary aim (following the educational goal) the fostering of Christian friendships among the women who participate in the study groups. Are women able to overcome a contemporary friendship deficit syndrome more easily when they share a common goal of learning about Church teachings on their dignity and nature?

Contemporary Catholic vocations are affected by the wounds of the modern world; and such a wound or scar often, but not always, leads to an incapacity to form deep, meaningful, and long lasting virtue-friendships which would significantly support the fulfilment of our vocation.

del 1. C. S. Lewis understood the great gift of Christian friendship, and of **its anticipation of the Kingdom of Heaven**: “Friendship exhibits a glorious ‘nearness by resemblance,’ to Heaven itself where the very multitude of the blessed (which no man can number) increases the fruition which each has of God.”⁸⁵ He also reached towards, but without succeeding, to elaborate a theory of real complementarity in friendships of a man and a woman, or in friendships among lay men,

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 10. Of course, the real value of fostering chaste friendships in religious life requires a religious to always be open in charity to every sister or brother, while at the same time allowing her or his natural affections to be simultaneously expressed and well-grounded.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 62. See also, “The preceding pages have, I hope, made clear why to me at least it seems no wonder if our ancestors regarded Friendship as something that raised us almost above humanity. This love, free from instinct, free from all duties but those which love has freely assumed, almost wholly free from jealousy, and free without qualification from the need to be needed, is eminently spiritual.”, 77.

with friendships among lay women. In other words, Lewis properly rejected the notion that equal dignity of the two genders implied identity of friendships.⁸⁶

Lewis' theory of friendship-love, however, was also caught in the inherited difficulties of the modern era. His distinctions were so extreme, that his version of friendship suffered still from the Cartesian separation of mind and body. Consider the following:

For of course we do not want to know our Friend's affairs at all. Friendship, unlike Eros, is uninquisitive. You become a man's Friend without knowing or caring whether he is married or single or how he earns his living. What have this all these "unconcerning things, matters of fact" to do with the real question. *Do you see the same truth?* In a circle of true Friends each man is simply what he is: stands for nothing but himself. ... That is the kingliness of Friendship... This love (essentially) ignores not only our physical bodies but that whole embodiment which consists of our family, job, past and connections... It is an affair of disentangled, or stripped, minds.⁸⁷

Erasmus Leiva-Merikakis recognized this fault in Lewis' theory of friendship, and he amplified it by showing that Lewis' strict distinctions also emptied friendship from the warmth of affectivity: "In fact, I quite strongly disagree with Lewis when, in order completely to distinguish between philia and eros, he all but says that philia has no emotional element and that true friendship is the result of a purely calm, deliberate choice, as if we were dealing with disembodied spirits. I think, rather, that there is a sense in which friendship chooses you before you have had much to say about it."⁸⁸

Lewis' tendency to limit friendships to shared minds, while ignoring unique human contexts of body and of lives, is captured in his odd conclusion that "Hence we picture lovers face to face but friends side by side; their eyes look ahead."⁸⁹ This claim of Lewis goes directly counter to previously mentioned descriptions of friends as speaking face to face. It is a distortion

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 72-76.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁸⁸ Leiva-Merikakis, *Love's Sacred Order*, 76-77.

⁸⁹ Lewis *Four Loves*, 66.

del of the full understanding of friendship as a virtue which focuses on the good of the friend through communication.

2. Jacques and Raïssa Maritain, between 1924 and the 1960's, wrote about their own experience of friendship in marriage. Raïssa began with her 1924 *Journal* entry, continued with her book *We Have Been Friends Together*, and Jacques added his own views in "Love and Friendship" to complement those his wife had written earlier.⁹⁰

In her entry for Easter Sunday, April 20, 1924 Raïssa writes the following: "The essence of Love is in the communication of oneself, with fulness of joy and delight in the possession of the beloved. The essence of friendship is in desire for the good of one's friend, strong enough to sacrifice for him. God loves us with friendship by providing for all our necessities and by dying for us on the Cross. God loves us with love by making us participate in his nature by grace—by making the sanctified soul his dwelling."⁹¹ Jacques then adds the following footnote, which indicates a direction for a new integration within the human person, which Pope Benedict recently elaborated on in *Deus Caritas Est*.

~~The love, which is *eros* in the realm of the passions, is already, though on a lower level, *eros-agape* in the truly human world: and it is also—I mean in an analogical and absolutely supereminent manner in which all that pertains to the passions is transcended—*eros-agape*, "mad" boundless love, the love of mutual self-giving (cf. the Song of Songs) in the spiritual order. (There is, no doubt, a distinction of meaning between *eros* and *agape*, but the radical opposition people choose to make between them nowadays has no foundation).~~

~~**Friendship, which is *agape-philía*, the love of mutual good will**, in our human world (for the Greeks it deviated towards *eros-philía*), is also—I mean in an analogical and absolutely super-eminent manner — *agape-philía* in the spiritual order.~~⁹²

⁹⁰ Raïssa Maritain, *We Have Been Friends Together* (New York: Image, 1962); and "Love and Friendship (A Marginal note to the Journal de Raïssa) in *Collected Works of Jacques Maritain*, vol. XX: *Untrammelled Approaches*, chapter ix, On Moral Philosophy II, 165-197.

⁹¹ Raïssa's *Journal: Presented by Jacques Maritain* (Albany, N.Y.: Magi Books, Inc., 1974), 162-63.

⁹² Jacques' note, *Ibid.*, 162 n. 2.

Ten years later Raïssa reflected on the eschatological dimension of the friendship in her marriage

to Jacques, when in an entry for 1934, she writes:

Death puts an end to the sacrament of marriage - for then another marriage becomes lawful, and a new sacrament of marriage....

But does there then remain nothing for heaven of the union of a husband and wife, faithful to each other till death? - What remains is what friendship may have created of purely spiritual union between them, of similarity of soul, of equality of merits, perhaps, in a life in which everything has been in common.⁹³

Jacques and Raïssa elevated Christian friendship to a very high level of love infusing it with all of the intensity that was first identified by Thomas Aquinas in his description of charity-friendship. At the same time, however, they introduced a new dimension of love, which they called "Amor fou", or love-madness, a kind of love that so completely gathered up the person with it that he or she was unable to give the self to another also with "amor fou". Only one being could be its object, either God or one other person.⁹⁴

Jacques Maritain articulated very clearly how a married man and woman work for one another's sanctification through friendship:

[Marriage] has to transform romantic love, or what was there at the beginning, into a real and indestructible human love, a love that is radically free of all self-centeredness, which by no means excludes sensual desire and passion, but which in itself and by its essence is principally spiritual—a complete and irrevocable gift of one to the other, for the love of the other.

The love I am speaking of here is above all a love of dilection. It is not necessarily an amour fou; but it is necessarily and primordially a love of devotedness and friendship—that absolutely unique friendship between married people one of whose essential ends is the spiritual companionship between a man and a woman in order that they may help each other fulfill their destiny in this world.⁹⁵

According to Jacques Maritain, this work of husband and wife for one another's sanctification and for eschatological union occurs within the "regime of friendship" in the relations of the soul

⁹³ Raïssa's entry, 230-231.

⁹⁴ Jacques Maritain, "Love and Friendship," in *The Collected Works of Jacques Maritain*, vol. xx (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997): chapter ix 'Love and Friendship', here 172.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 184.

The Seventh Step
X
with God" and ^{is} it one through which the spouses "work out their mutual emancipation from the weight of those hereditary fatal flaws which their dead ancestors imposed on them."⁹⁶ Their vocation is holy redemptive work.

3. **Karol Wojtyla** explained *Love and Responsibility* (1960) how the redemptive work of a woman and a man involves overcoming the tendencies of original sin. In the realm of love and friendship, he states that "Concupiscence is a consistent tendency to see persons of the other sex through the prism of sexuality alone, as 'objects of potential enjoyment.'"⁹⁷ Wojtyla opens up the inner dynamics of Aristotle's descriptions of friendships of pleasure, friendships of utility, and friendships of virtue so that the effects of original sin may be overcome: "Concupiscence, then, refers to a latent inclination of human beings to invert the objective order of values. For the correct way to see and 'desire' a person is through the medium of his or her value as a person."⁹⁸

Wojtyla describes how a man is tempted to use a woman for sexual pleasure and a woman is tempted to use a man for sentimental affection:

Whereas in the woman sensuality is as it were covert, and concealed by sentimentality. For this reason she is 'by nature' more inclined to go on seeing as a manifestation of affection what a man already clearly realizes to be the effect of sensuality and the desire for enjoyment. There exists then, as we see, a certain psychological divergence between man and woman in the manner of their participation in love."⁹⁹

He argues that both the woman and the man, when called into the vocation of marriage, must freely choose to develop their capacity for gift of self to the other. Each one has to develop the capacity to integrate their sensual and sentimental affections within a higher value of love for a particular person.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 186.

⁹⁷ Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1981), 159.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 111-112.

integrates with love. separates

The sensual and emotional experiences which are so vividly present in the consciousness form only the outward expression and also the outward gauge of what is inside the persons involved. Self-giving can have its full value only when it involves and is the work of will. For it is free will that makes the person its own master... Betrothed love, the love that is a gift of self, commits the will in a particularly profound way.¹⁰⁰

He adds further, that in betrothed love, the gift of self has to be reciprocal and mutual. Thus, Wojtyla concludes: "We can also see here how essential it is for betrothed love, a love which is a reciprocal giving of self, to contain the inner structure of friendship."¹⁰¹ We could add then, that when a couple called to marriage learns how to become true friends, they help one another in the redemptive work of overcoming the inherited sin of their ancestors.

Elaborating in more detail the virtue dimension of this kind of friendship/love, Wojtyla argues: "...love between a woman and a man cannot remain on the level of mere sympathy but must become friendship. For in friendship — and here it is unlike mere sympathy — the decisive part is played by the will. I desire a good for you just as I desire it for myself, for my own 'I'. The content and structure of friendship can be summed up in this formula. It brings out the element of benevolentia or good will."¹⁰² Arguing against the Kantian view of friendship as pure duty with out affections, Wojtyla states that sympathy is essential to friendship, because it provides its "proper climate and proper emotional warmth."¹⁰³ He concludes: "If we consider the implications of all this for the education of love, there is one crystal clear requirement: sympathy must be transformed into friendship, and friendship supplemented by sympathy."¹⁰⁴ He adds for emphasis: "A mistake often made in love between

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 126.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 129.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 91. See also, "...it is also necessary to supplement friendship with sympathy, without which it will remain cold and incommunicable.", 92.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*.

people, and especially between man and woman, is to leave it, so to speak, at the level of sympathy, with no conscious attempt to mould it into friendship.”¹⁰⁵

In other words, those who want to develop friendships must overcome a passive attitude of simple affectivity towards their friends, by real efforts of intellect and will, in mutual self-gift, oriented towards the good of the other person, and over time. **“Friendship... consists in a full commitment of the will to another person with a view to that person’s good. There is, therefore, a need for sympathy to ripen into friendship and this process normally demands time and reflection.”**¹⁰⁶ Wojtyla’s approach in *Love and Responsibility* is one way to overcome the friendship deficit syndrome mentioned at the beginning of this section.

In *The Acting Person*, (1969) Karol Wojtyla opened up the dynamism within which a human person can integrate psyche, soma, intellect, and will through practicing transcendence in actions, especially in interpersonal interactions. “The person’s integration in the action is based upon this *dynamic totality*, while any defects in this domain we characterize as *disintegration*.”¹⁰⁷ He describes a “personalistic value” of an action as the way in which a person performing an action “also fulfills himself in it [or not as the case may be].”¹⁰⁸ One of the basic levels of friendship occurs when two or more persons act together for the common good of a common project. This would be akin to Lewis’ description of two friends standing side-by-side. Each friend participates together with others for a common goal.

A deeper form of friendship, however, may occur when persons enter into inter-personal participation. In a marriage, a religious community, or a parish, Wojtyla describes an attitude of solidarity in which “every member of a community has to be ready to ‘complement’ by his action

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Karol Wojtyla, *The Acting Person* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1979), 202.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 265.

what is done by other members of the community. This mutual complementariness is in a way an intrinsic element in the very nature of participation... It is this attitude that allows man [male and female] to find the fulfillment of himself in complementing others."¹⁰⁹ Here we see Wojtyla introducing a rich new understanding of the friend as more than another self; the friend is a complement self, someone like me, but not just another I. Rather he or she is like me, equal in personal dignity, but significantly different in some respects.

Wojtyla elaborates certain authentic characteristics of persons joined by solidarity in this sense: they participate for the common good of the community by being willing to overcome all temptation to passive conformism, and instead to engage in dialogue in which at times they may need to oppose the views of the friend. "Dialogue, in fact, without evading the strains, the conflicts, or the strife manifest in the life of various human communities takes up what is right and true in these differences, what may become a source of good for men [and women]."¹¹⁰ No longer are the friends simply side-by-side, but they are now face-to-face, engaged in the mutual search for truth and the good related to their particular vocations.

In 1978 Karol Cardinal Wojtyla, was elevated to become Pope John Paul II. His philosophy and theology of friendship was integrated into numerous Church documents, a brief summary of which will may us to fulfil our specific vocations better. Those who lived their vocations to the laity exemplify what John Paul II in his (1988) post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici (The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People)* described: "In particular the sharing of the lay faithful has its own manner of realization and function, which, according to the Council, is 'properly and particularly' theirs. Such manner is designated with the expression 'secular character.'... They are persons who live an ordinary life in the world: they

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 285.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 287.

study, they work, **they form relationships as friends**, professionals, members of society, cultures, etc.”¹¹¹

The Second Vatican Council constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, elaborated more particularly on how a husband and wife work for the good of one another:

✓ Finally, in virtue of the sacrament of Matrimony by which they signify and share (cf. Eph 5:32) the mystery of the unity and faithful love between Christ and the Church, Christian married couples **help one another to attain holiness in their married life** and in the rearing of their children.¹¹²

Like friendships based on virtue, sacramental marriages ask one spouse to help the other spouse attain holiness, rather than focus primarily on one own sanctification.

A This vocation to Christian friendship in marriage is developed even more explicitly in the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, in section 14 titled: “Marriage as a Sacrament of Mutual Sanctification and an Act of Worship.” It describes how Jesus Christ abides with spouses to help them to love each other “through mutual self-bestowal,” because as they are penetrated with the Spirit of Christ, who fills their whole lives with faith, hope, and charity, [t]hey increasingly advance towards their own perfection, as well as towards their mutual sanctification...”¹¹³

Pope Benedict XVI

After Pope John Paul II died in 2005, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, gave the homily on the Occasion of the Election of the new Pope. In this homily he called for: “a mature adult faith

¹¹¹ John Paul II, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici (The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People)* (1988), #15. See also, # 28, 35, and 46.

¹¹² *Lumen Gentium, Vatican Council II, The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Northport, N Y. Costello Publishing Co., 1998), vol. 1, #11. See also where this passage is quoted in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1641.

¹¹³ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio: On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World*, (1981), #14.

[that] is deeply rooted in friendship with Christ. It is this friendship that opens us up to all that is good and gives us a criterion by which to distinguish the true from the false, and deceit from truth."¹¹⁴

Cardinal Ratzinger reminds us that although we must work to build friendships of virtue by acts of intellect and will, we can not by ourselves build Christian friendships, for these are first offered to us by Jesus Christ. While his words were addressed to the Cardinals in the conclave, they can be applied equally to the three paradigm vocations:

1) The Lord calls us friends, he makes us his friends, he gives us his friendship. The Lord gives friendship a dual definition. There are no secrets between friends: Christ tells us all that he hears from the Father; he gives us his full trust and with trust, also knowledge. He reveals his face and his heart to us. **He reveals his face and his heart to us.** He shows us the tenderness he feels for us, his passionate love that goes even as far as the folly of the Cross. He entrusts himself to us... He entrusts his Body, the Church to us.

2) The second element Jesus uses to define friendship is the communion of wills. ... Our redemption is brought about in this communion of wills: **being friends of Jesus, to become friends of God... Thank you, Jesus, for your friendship! ...**

3) It is here that appears the dynamism of the life of a Christian...: I chose you to go forth. We must be enlivened by a holy restlessness: **a restlessness to bring everyone the gift of faith, of friendship with Christ. Truly, the love and friendship of God was given to us so that it might also be shared with others.**¹¹⁵

The dynamic energy for friendship with Christ that pours out of this homily blossomed into Pope Benedict XVI's first encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, (2006). He sought to heal the wounded direction of charity and friendship-love in order to draw all Catholics into beginning again to live Christian friendship. The Holy Father describes three kinds of love: charity, friendship, and erotic love. He distinguishes their particular characteristics and then describes how they can be integrated and reunited in the fullness of Christian vocation.

1) The characteristics of agape or charity are: it is a descending love from God, freely given, based on the character of the one loving, an amor benevolente, an oblative love, a love that

¹¹⁴ Joseph Ratzinger, Homily, "Pro Eligendo Romano Pontifice", available at www.vatican.va/gpII/documents/homily-pro-eligendo-pontifice_200050418_en.html [cited 4/16/2007], p. 2.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3

passes through the pierced side of Christ, an elective love in which God chooses a person like Peter, a healing love because it is a forgiving love, and a love of neighbor which is also called “friendship charity.”¹¹⁶

2) In contrast to this descending love of God, Pope Benedict also describes an ascending love that springs out of the hearts of all men and women, a love which he names eros. He identifies four levels of eros, or four different kinds of eros. We need to be attentive to the differences among them, because they often penetrate and transform friendships for the better or for the worse. At the lowest level, [1] eros is simply a desire or sex-drive, which is so impersonal that anyone can satisfy it. At the second level, [2] eros becomes a form of personal love for something or someone that has value for us in our self-centered personal identity; it is a possessive or covetous non-Christian love, or *amor concupiscentia*.¹¹⁷ At a still higher third level, [3] eros can turn one's focus away from the self and self-gratification and rise in ecstasy (ex-stasis) towards the Divine object of love seeking to love in an inter-personal way, by renunciation of self-centeredness, by purifying disordered desires, and by healing the wounded condition of one's human nature. Finally, at the fourth, highest, and most inter-Personal level, Pope Benedict states that [4] there is eros love in God, even though He is totally agape, because

¹¹⁶ Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006), #6-7, 10, 14, and 25.

¹¹⁷ Pope Benedict redirects this Platonic model of homosexual *eros*, whose imaginary mythical roots were also described by Aristophanes in the Symposium, away from homosexual eros towards heterosexual eros: “[O]ne might detect hints of ideas that are also found, for example, in the myth mentioned by Plato, according to which man was originally spherical, because he was complete in himself and self-sufficient. But as a punishment for pride, he was split in two by Zeus, so that now he longs for his other half, striving with all his being to possess it and thus to regain his integrity... [T]he idea is certainly present that man is somehow incomplete, driven by nature to seek in another the part that can make him whole, the idea that only in communion with the opposite sex can he become ‘complete.’”, Plato, *Symposium*, XIV-XV, *Collected Works*, eds., Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961), 217 c-219e 189c-192d, in Benedict, *Deus Caritas Est*, #11.

St. Thomas
Aquinas

in the Holy Trinity there is always a tending of one Divine Person towards another Divine Person, and also because God enjoys loving us.¹¹⁸

X
X If we think of the love of friendship (*philia*) as an interpersonal relationship, we can imagine it as fitting horizontally, like the cross-bar between the descending agape love of God and the ascending eros love of our human nature. Friendship is often lived out in the middle of the tensions of various forms of eros springing up within us and of the gifts of Divine love or agape reaching down to us, lifting us up, and sending us forth to live our vocation for the good of others. In the particular vocation to which we have been called, our task is to reject outward acting on the lower forms of eros love with asceticism proper to our state in life, to integrate the energy of the higher forms of eros love into our love for Jesus Christ. At the same time, being renewed by the agape love of the Holy Trinity shared with us in the Sacraments, and especially the Holy Eucharist, we go forth to foster ever deep bonds of friendship with those to whom we are bound by our vocation, i.e., spouse and family, brother seminarians and priests, or sisters or brothers in our religious community.

Pope Benedict offers in *Deus Caritas Est* a clear response to the Cartesian separation of mind and body, which has had such distorting effects on theories of friendship in modern philosophy and beyond. In his goal to foster the true integration of the way human beings love he states:

X 1 Man is truly himself when his body and soul are intimately united; the challenge of eros can be said to be truly overcome when this unification is achieved. Should he aspire to be pure spirit and to reject the flesh as pertaining to his animal nature alone, then spirit and body would both lose their dignity. On the other hand, should he deny the spirit and consider matter, the body, as the only reality, he would likewise lose his greatness. The epicure Gassendi used to offer Descartes the humorous greeting: "O Soul!" And Descartes would reply: "O Flesh!" Yet it is neither the spirit alone nor the body alone that loves: it is man, the person, a unified creature composed of body and soul, who loves. Only when both dimensions are truly united does man attain his full stature. Only thus is love—eros—able to mature and attain its authentic grandeur.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Benedict, *Deus Caritas Est*, #3-8, 11, and 17.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, #5.